

Cecil Polhil (1860-1938).

by Keith Malcomson

Cecil Polhil's life and ministry were marked by a strong call to missionary service, a deep commitment to the Pentecostal Movement, and a lasting impact on global revival.

Scripture: Proverbs 19:17, Matthew 28:19, Acts 1:8, 1 Corinthians 12:4, Ephesians 3:20

Topics: "Missions Work", "Pentecostal Movement"

Description

Keith Malcomson shares the inspiring story of Cecil H. Polhill, a man born into wealth and privilege who was transformed by the conviction of sin and the powerful evangelistic ministry of D.L. Moody. Influenced by Hudson Taylor, Polhill dedicated his life to missions, particularly in China and India, with a strong desire to reach Tibet. His encounter with the Pentecostal outpouring in Los Angeles led him to seek and receive the Baptism in the Holy Ghost, becoming a key figure in the early Pentecostal movement in Britain. Polhill's commitment to training and sending out Pentecostal missionaries, along with his financial support and missionary vision, played a crucial role in shaping the Pentecostal revival and its focus on foreign missions.

Transcript

Cecil H. Polhil was born into a wealthy family at Howbury Hall near Bedford in England. His father was a member of Parliament and of great respect. He was educated at Eton and Cambridge after which he served as an officer in the Dragoon Guards. His brother Arthur was saved through the powerful evangelistic ministry of D.L. Moody. When Cecil attended Moody's meetings he came under conviction of sin which finally led to his salvation.

The life, testimony and work of Hudson Taylor had a profound affect upon him. Along with his brother Arthur and C.T. Studd he felt the call of God to the Chinese mission field with Taylors ministry called the Chinese Inland Mission or CIM. This mission never made appeals for money or made known its needs to man. Its workers trusted God alone, yet were never in debt and were able to penetrate deep into China with hundreds of faithful workers. Before leaving for China in 1885 he travelled with the Cambridge Seven around Britain holding meetings, seeing hundreds saved every where they went and many young students dedicating themselves to missionary service. Over the next years he ministered in China and India but always with a great burden and drive to reach into Tibet. Hudson Taylor's strong faith and prayer life left a mark on the young zealous Polhill. After 15 faithful years of missionary labour he had to leave China during the boxer rebellion in 1900 after which he returned to Britain with his family.

While passing through America in January 1908 on a return journey from China he heard of the Pentecostal outpouring of the Holy Ghost in Los Angeles. He made his journey to Azusa Street seeking for the Baptism in the Holy Ghost. After receiving a mighty baptism he returned to Britain and soon joined up in fellowship with A.A.Boddy. That year at Sunderland the Pentecostal Missionary Union (PMU) came into being with Polhill elected the first President (1909-25). Over the following years this union sent missionaries to China, India, Tibet, Congo and Brazil. Also the same year (1908) he started weekly meetings in Sion College, London. In these meetings a number of students and future leaders were saved, baptized in the Holy Ghost and healed, as well as making their first attempts to testify publicly. He established separate training homes for both men and women in the city. And also an annual Whitsuntide convention in London similar to those in Sunderland. Polhill helped the Jeffreys brothers at an early stage in their ministry and financially sponsored young George Jeffreys who had been recommended to attend the Preston Bible College under Myerscough. A few years later he brought Donald Gee from his struggling church in Edinburgh to play the piano at one of Stephen Jeffreys Campaigns in London.

He carried the responsibility of training and sending out the first Pentecostal missionaries. His experience and missionary burden were critical in moulding this revival from the beginning to look out with a vision of the harvest fields in foreign lands. During the rest of his life he would make several short missionary trips back to China. His financial help, missionary vision and training facilities were of great importance at this early, formative stage to Pentecostal believers. Like Alexander Boddy, he remained within the Anglican Church and had no desire to see a new separate Pentecostal denomination established. A missionary Union was one thing, but a denomination quite another. During the whole period of his ministry with the Pentecostal Movement he also remained on the Council of the C.I.M. until his death in 1938.

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